



# News Release

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## **Back to school prep should start with immunizations**

*Protect your children from vaccine-preventable diseases*

**OLYMPIA** — It may seem early to think about summer break ending, but it's time for Washington's children to get ready for school. With outbreaks of whooping cough, flu, and chickenpox in our state in the last year, and a large measles outbreak just across the border in Canada, parents should make sure their kids are protected by being fully immunized.

Childhood vaccinations are among the most effective ways to protect children against serious, preventable illnesses — some of which have no cure or treatment. Parents should use the next several weeks to ensure their kids have all the immunizations they need to attend school. Get ahead of the back-to-school rush by scheduling a yearly health checkup for your kids now.

“Parents make many important decisions to keep their children healthy, and getting immunized is one of the most important,” said State Health Officer and pediatrician [Dr. Maxine Hayes](#). “Be sure your child's immunizations are up-to-date — it protects them, their classmates, families, and communities.” ([Note: audio cuts available online.](#))

All recommended vaccines for children under 19 are provided at no-cost through the state's Childhood Vaccine Program. This includes vaccines required for school and child care, and vaccines that aren't required but are recommended for best protection, such as human papillomavirus (HPV) for pre-teens. Your health care provider may still charge an office visit or administration fee, but this can be waived if you're unable to pay.

“Washington's Childhood Vaccine Program shows our state's commitment to preventing the spread of serious disease,” said Dr. Hayes. “We've made it easy for parents to take advantage of the best way to protect their children and those in their community.”

Several immunizations are required before children can attend school and child care. Students in kindergarten through ninth grade must be vaccinated against whooping cough. This is especially important with recent outbreaks in our state. Kindergarteners, first, and second graders need two doses of the chickenpox (varicella) vaccine or must have a health care provider document that they've had the disease. Kids starting third, fourth, and sixth grades must get one dose of the chickenpox vaccine or their parents must document that they've had the disease.

Health care providers can use the CHILD Profile Immunization Registry to help parents complete the necessary paperwork by printing it directly from the registry. Parents should request their child's shot records at least a month before school.

For help finding a health care provider or an immunization clinic, call your [local health agency](#) ([www.doh.wa.gov/LHJMap/LHJMap.htm](http://www.doh.wa.gov/LHJMap/LHJMap.htm)) or the [WithinReach](http://www.withinreachwa.org) ([www.withinreachwa.org](http://www.withinreachwa.org)) Family Health Hotline at 1-800-322-2588.

Although exemptions are allowed for medical, religious, or personal reasons, the best disease protection is to make sure children have all recommended immunizations. Children who aren't fully immunized may be excluded from attending school, pre-school, or child care if a disease outbreak occurs. Unvaccinated children are more likely to get sick or spread disease.

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Visit the Washington Department of Health website at <a href="http://www.doh.wa.gov">http://www.doh.wa.gov</a> for <i>a healthy dose of information</i> .
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